

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for Construction of Lower Table Rock Accessible Interpretive Trail

EA (Environmental Assessment) number OR 115-05-05

Proposed Action

The Bureau of Land Management, Medford District, Butte Falls Resource Area (BLM) proposes to construct an accessible interpretive trail loop on BLM-administered land within the Lower Table Rock portion of the Table Rock Area of Critical Environmental Concern in Township 36 South, Range 2 West, Section 4 (see Maps 1 and 2 in the EA). The project includes “constructing a new trail, upgrading a portion of the existing trail to meet accessibility guidelines, installing benches and interpretive panels, and repairing access to the toilet building” (EA p. 1). Nearly ½ mile of new trail would be built and 500 feet of existing trail would be upgraded to meet accessibility guidelines. The proposed trail would be located in the flat area near the existing parking area and would not access the top of Lower Table Rock.

Construction of this trail would “provide an interpretive trail in close proximity to Medford, Oregon that is accessible to a wide variety of people, including the elderly, people in wheelchairs, and the very young. The trail would have gradual slopes and would provide access to environmental education opportunities in a natural environment” (EA pg. 1). The BLM is mandated to provide accessible programs and facilities for people with disabilities when providing recreation facilities. The current trail on Lower Table Rock does not meet accessibility guidelines.

The trail project is described in more detail in the attached EA for *Construction of Lower Table Rock Accessible Interpretive Trail*. This document is available at the Medford District Office or on the BLM web site at <http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford>.

Consequences of the Proposed Action

In preparation of the EA, the following resources that may be affected by the proposed action were analyzed:

- **Recreation and Environmental Education:** Recreation and environmental education opportunities would increase for people with disabilities, the elderly, and the very young because these groups are currently excluded from those opportunities on the Table Rocks. Short-term disruption to hiking on the Lower Table Rock would occur during construction but this disruption is expected to be minimal because construction will occur after the height of the hiking season. Demands on the facilities will increase and maintenance will be increased as needed (EA p. 8).
- **Special Status Plants, Noxious Weeds, Nonnative Plants:** This project is within the range of three Threatened and Endangered plants - *Fritillaria gentneri*, *Lomatium cookii*, and *Limnanthes floccosa* ssp *grandiflora*. Surveys were completed for these species and none were present. As stated in the EA (p. 10), the proposed project will have “no affect” on these three plants. Surveys for Special Status plants were partially completed and none were discovered. Surveys for the remaining Special Status plants will be completed before the Decision Record is issued for this project. If Special Status plants are discovered, work will stop; the BLM will be notified; and mitigation, based on species, site-specific environmental conditions, and species-specific management recommendations, will be applied. As documented in the EA (p. 10), “trail construction would not lead to listing any Special Status plants.” Preproject surveys for fungi are not required and the project area does not contain suitable habitat for any of the 10 sensitive fungi on the Medford District list. Noxious weeds and nonnative plants could be introduced or spread during trail construction. Impacts will be mitigated by (1) seeding or planting soil exposed due to construction (2) inspecting plant sources for nonnative plants before use, (3) cleaning equipment prior to arrival on-site, and (4) treating noxious weeds before trail construction and monitoring after project completion (EA p. 6-7). I am confident these mitigations will be effective.
- **Hydrology (Surface Flows):** No perennial streams or riparian areas are located in the project area. Since slope gradients are low and overland flows are easily intercepted, impacts to surface flows are expected to be negligible (EA p. 12).

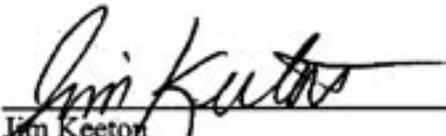
- **Soil:** As stated in the EA (p. 13), soil compaction and localized erosion will be minor and will be mitigated by (1) mulching, seeding, and/or planting soil exposed during construction and (2) restricting ground-disturbing activities when soil moisture exceeds 25 percent.
- **Cultural Resources:** Surveys were completed for archaeological resources. Prehistoric sites were recorded in the general area and impacts will be mitigated by (1) notifying the District Archaeologist so trail construction can be observed in identified areas and (2) halting construction and recording artifacts if subsurface remains are exposed. I am confident, based on the analysis in the EA (p. 14), that these mitigations will be effective.
- **Areas of Critical Environmental Concern:** Impacts to ACEC values were analyzed for dwarf woolly meadow-foam and other special status plants (see Special Status Plants), special status wildlife (no effect or negligible effect on sensitive species), unique geology and scenic values (no unique geology is in the project area and vegetative screening and use of a natural trail surface will reduce visual impacts), and education opportunities (see Recreation and Environmental Education). Based on the analysis in the EA (p. 14-15), impacts will not be significant.
- **Environmental Justice:** No disproportionate impacts will occur to minority or low income populations as a result of this project (EA p. 15).

It was determined the effects resulting from the proposed action would not be significant based on a consideration of both the context and intensity of the impacts. See the EA for discussions of impacts to the above resources.

The following critical elements would not be affected by the proposed action: air quality; farm lands; floodplains; Native American religious concerns; wastes, hazardous or solid; water quality, drinking/ground; wetlands/riparian zones; wild and scenic rivers; wild horse and burros; and wilderness.

FONSI

Based on the summary of effects (as discussed in the EA), I have determined the Proposed Action (Alternative 2), which I have chosen, will not have a significant effect on the human environment. For this reason, an environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.



Jim Keeton
Acting Butte Falls Field Manager



Date